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ABSTRACT

Part of a 10 booklet series on talented and gifted education, the booklet discusses organizing a support group for parents of talented and gifted children. Aspects described include making the contacts, developing the structure of the group, possible group projects and activities, and suggested program topics. Techniques for insuring group success are also described. Model by-laws for such a group are appended. (DLS)

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# Organizing a Parent Support Group for Talented and Gifted

# ORGANIZING A PARENT SUPPORT GROUP FOR TALENTED AND GIFTED

Jackie Buisman

This series was cooperatively developed by the following: Project Director - Robert Siewert, Specialist, Talented and Gifted Programs, Oregon Department of Education, Salem, Oregon; Project Coordinator - Carleen Matthews, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory; Series Editor - Candy Withycombe; and Richard Arends, University of Oregon.

Oregon Association for Talented And Gifted

Oregon State DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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Sandra Howell has a long association with gifted education in Oregon. Once a teaching assistant with Elizebeth Monroe Drews and Portland State University, Sandra is now the project director for M.A.C.E., a Title IV C project for talented and gifted children.

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# FOREWORD

The purpose of this booklet is to assist parents in the organization of a support group for talented and gifted. The needs for a support group for parents of talented and gifted children are identified. The booklet describes organizing techniques for the support groups--contacts that can be made, development of structure for the group, special projects and activities, and program topics. Techniques for insuring group success are also described. Model by-laws are given in the Appendix.

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## A UNIFIED EFFORT

A parent support group is a unified effort to meet the needs of parents and their talented and gifted children. The people who most significantly touch the lives of talented and gifted children are the parents. These special adults, more than anyone else, have the opportunity and responsibility to guide and support these talented and gifted children into realizing and continually stretching to reach their full potential.

Talented and gifted children have special needs--needs of guidance, emotional support and educational opportunities. When these are fulfilled, they are able to rise to their greatest capabilities. They need an understanding with and from their peers and adults. Not only do the children have these special needs, but so do their parents. Parents are continually faced with special challenges.

- "I'd love to talk about my child's successes, but I'm afraid it would be bragging."

- "I think my child is gifted, but I don't know who to talk to."
- "He's only four but thinks in analogies, reads at the third grade level, memorizes all the TV commercials, and wants to go to school. He has two years to wait. What can I do?"

Frustrations because people don't understand, and fears of rejection, scorn, envy, and loneliness can be eased

when parents meet other parents to talk, to share concerns and to plan for these children.

A safe, responsive environment can provide the necessary emotional support parents are seeking. A parent support group can not only do this, but can also open communication channels between the schools and community to enhance appropriate educational opportunities for talented and gifted children. With these lines open, parents, teachers and community forces can share and plan together, dissolving many of their problems and concerns. When the home, school and community work together, the child's special needs may be realized more quickly and conscientiously.

## HOW TO ORGANIZE A PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

### MAKING THE CONTACTS

Each community may be at a different stage of development in meeting the needs of the talented and gifted. Some schools will be underway with programs, others in the planning phase, and some in the "no-plan" stage. In some communities, parent groups may be in the formative stages already, while in others only the occasional voice of an isolated parent advocating talented and gifted programming for his or her own child will be heard.

A parent support group may come in all shapes and sizes. It will grow and develop into a viable group as people begin to share with one another.

- Possibly your favorite method of communication is sitting down in a cozy living room sharing with a handful of other parents "what parenting the gifted is all about."

- An informal session to share experiences and ideas may totally hit the target for your needs. Coffees in homes with a guest from the school or the Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted (OATAG) may answer questions and help the small informal group become familiar with resources and books of interest.

The number in each group may vary. The key to success is the quality of the people in the group, not the quantity. Quality comes from discovering some common

needs of those together. Once the problem or common needs are identified, the group may brainstorm to set possible goals.

- "I'd like to get together and talk about recommended books."

- "Well, I just moved here, and I'd like to talk about places to go."
- "I have an idea. Let's plan a trip together for our children."

These are some of the informal ways groups may cooperate to support both needs of parents and children.

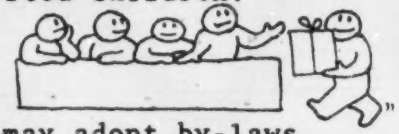
How do you begin? A feeling of isolation makes it difficult for some to begin. Two or three parents with gifted children can begin to support each other and develop some understanding of the gifted and talented.

You may begin by contacting the local school personnel: the superintendent, principal, counselor, teachers and school board members. Ask if there is a local organization, and if so, whom should you contact? Join efforts with them. If not, ask for names of others who have also inquired. Leave your name and ask for it to be passed on to others who inquire about the talented and gifted. If there is a program in the school, but no parent organization, ask if you can send a notice home via the children.

Write to the State Specialist for Talented and Gifted in the Oregon Department of Education and to the Oregon Association, for Talented and Gifted (OATAG) to obtain names of regional and local community groups. They too may have some leads for you. Contact your local Education Service District (ESD) to find out what is happening throughout the county.

With the support of a few people with the same interests, you are on your way. It only takes a few concerned parents and educators to establish a viable group. Notification of an organizational meeting could be announced in the local newspaper and the newletters of the ESD, school, PTA, district, and OATAG. Word of mouth will be one of your best methods of communication. Soon you will have people contacting you.

Step by step with patience, time and effort, you will have a core group who can form a task force to establish initial goals and objectives and a plan to achieve them. "Allow your group time to grow. Many times school districts adopt a 'wait and see' attitude before establishing a working relationship with a parent group, and remember also that the school district is not the 'enemy.' It represents your best chance of securing appropriate educational opportunities for talented and gifted children."*



DEVELOPING THE STRUCTURE

The newly established task force may adopt by-laws, select pro-tem officers, incorporate and then present a comprehensive package to the community. Print informational brochures with tentative goals, dues and a date set for a membership meeting. At that meeting you could give an interest survey and recruit volunteers for committees. By-laws should be flexible and simple. Model by-laws are included in the Appendix. The working body of the association should include

* U.S. Office of Gifted and Talented, U.S. Office of Education, by the Council for Exceptional Children, "Forming a Local Parent Association for Talented and Gifted Education," January 1978.

elected officers such as President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, and your appointed committee Chairperson. Possible committees may include By-Laws, Budget, Membership, Newsletter, Dues, Legislation, Elections, Publicity, Community Resources, Education, Scholarship, and Program.

Incorporate your organization to limit personal liability and provide tax exemptions. Membership dues will be tax deductible. For incorporating, contact the Oregon Department of Commerce, Corporation Division, for the necessary forms. Get the State Tax Exemption Forms from the Department of State Revenue. Contact the Internal Revenue Service for the Federal Tax Exemption Form #1023 and Form #SS4 to apply for a federal employer identification number. The IRS has a publication #557 explaining qualification for IRS tax exemption. For information on non-profit or bulk-rate mailing contact your local post office. Check on insurance coverage, especially if you plan to sponsor classes or activities for children. An attorney may be willing to advise you on these matters.

Select a name for your group that notifies the public and potential members where your interests are. For example, "The (your city's name) Association for Talented and Gifted." Membership dues should be sufficient to cover expenses such as newsletters, mailings, printings, phone costs and special programs.

An Advisory Board made up of professicnal people who are advocates of the talented and gifted can be a real asset in your initial planning and later in supporting your efforts in the community and school.

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

The following is a list of possible actions your group may plan to do:

- Do an interest survey of the membership to find out which activities and projects they want to do.
- Develop a library and resource center.
- Sponsor public workshops and discussion sessions.
- Develop a Mentor Program so individual children can work with a specialist in his or her field.
- Develop a volunteer program to arrange and conduct field trips in the community.
- Give scholarship aid to talented and gifted children.
- Sponsor "Kids Meet Kids" outings.
- Publish a newsletter with local, state and national news, book reviews and children's works.
- Actively work towards talented and gifted legislation to provide funds for programs and training teachers.

- Sponsor "Get-Acquainted" sessions for parents with teachers, counselors, principals, OATAG board members, Department of Education representatives and other people who directly and indirectly touch the lives of the talented and gifted.

- Produce a film, video tape, or slide/tape presentation on talented and gifted.

PROGRAM TOPICS

The following is a list of possible topics that you may want to explore:

- Characteristics of talented and gifted children
- Role of the parents in the child's education
- Identification and selection procedures for school programs
- Understanding the problems of talented and gifted children
- Developing the self-concept of the parent and child
- Legislation and judicial decisions affecting talented and gifted programs
- Existing school programs for the talented and gifted
- How to start a program for the gifted
- Social and emotional problems of the talented and gifted
- Models of thinking and the creative process
- History of education and awareness of the talented and gifted
- Evaluation procedures of programs

- Materials and publications available on talented and gifted programs
- Community resources: "People to see and places to go"
- Activities to do at home

## INSURE GROUP SUCCESS

### BE EFFECTIVE

An effective group determines goals and purposes to meet its own special needs. It identifies and solves problems with a commitment to support its decisions. Individuals join a group with certain ideas and needs. An effective group allows time to explore individual ideas and needs while keeping a balance between group consensus and individual dominance.

### BE PRODUCTIVE

Committees and individuals need to follow through on group commitments and continue to plan, re-evaluate and solve problems. The membership will change as you grow. Have flexible attitudes towards new ideas and procedures. Many assets are intangible. Some of them might include an inspiring speech, a "heart-to-heart" with a new member, a decision to carry out your idea. Products that are tangible include newsletters, field trips and resource files. The group needs to be aware of its accomplishments. This inspires people to accomplish more.

### DEVELOP OWNERSHIP

Share in the tasks right from the beginning to give all people a feeling of ownership. A project that has acceptance by a group will get the group's energy, time and enthusiasm and this builds a shared feeling of

commitment. Maintain those feelings and watch your team efforts multiply.

## REVITALIZE YOUR GROUP

Groups go through different stages. Periods of great organization and growth may be followed by periods of less effectiveness. If your group's energy has fallen, find ways to recapture constructive energy. Assign a task group to re-evaluate your goals, procedures and direction. The group may recommend doing an interest survey with the membership. It may be time to set new goals and try new methods for reaching them.

## KNOW THE CHARACTERISTICS OF "ALIVE AND WELL"

The results often speak for themselves. People are feeling useful. They want to support their interests. There is a feeling of sincerity, a genuine regard for opinions, and a willingness to work hard and give quality time to projects. A total involvement leads to planning, problem solving, evaluating and looking ahead. Keep your group "alive and well" to benefit the talented and gifted.

GET READY...GET SET...GO...

Meet the challenge. Find others who know that a parent support group is needed in your community. Talk to others and discover that a unified effort will begin to meet the needs of talented and gifted children.

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Sayers, Susan, "#9 Effective Groups; Guidelines for Participants," Keys to Community Involvement, National School Public Relations Association, Arlington, Virginia, 1978.

Sisk, Dorothy, "What if Your Child is Gifted?" American Education, October 1977.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON TALENTED AND GIFTED

Association for the Gifted (TAG)
Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091

Bob Siewart, Specialist for Talented and Gifted
Rod Meyer, Center for Program Coordination
Oregon Department of Education
Salem, Oregon 97310

ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)
217 Gregory Drive
Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901

National/State Leadership Training Institute on Gifted/
Talented
316 West Second Street PHOC
Los Angeles, California 90012

Office of Gifted and Talented, USOE
Room 2100
7th and D Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted (OATAG)
P.O. Box 930
Beaverton, Oregon 97005

## APPENDIX

## MODEL BY-LAWS FOR A TALENTED AND GIFTED ASSOCIATION

Prepared by Jackie Buisman,
President
Oregon Association for Talented
and Gifted (OATAG)

### Article I--Name

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be "_____ Association for Talented and Gifted."

### Article II--Aims and Purposes

Section 1. To support programs which increase the quality of educational programs for all children.

Section 2. To increase public awareness of the need for educational opportunities for talented and gifted children.

Section 3. To open and encourage communication among all who are interested in the needs of talented and gifted children.

Section 4. To encourage special university, state and local programs for all interested in the education of talented and gifted.

Section 5. To encourage research studies and utilize research findings which will benefit talented and gifted children.

Section 6. To assist in the coordination of activities with parents, teachers, and other community groups which develop and disseminate materials for the guidance of talented and gifted children.

Section 7. To support and assist the enactment and implementation of national, state and local legislative programs which benefit educational opportunities for talented and gifted children.

Section 8. To encourage and assist other Oregon communities to organize similar non-profit groups with these aims and purposes and cooperate with existing local and state groups.

## Article III--Membership

Section 1. Membership in this non-profit organization shall be open to all who have paid the current year's fees.

Section 2. Honorary membership may be given by the Executive Board to any person having contributed in an outstanding manner to projects of this association or to the education or welfare of talented and gifted children.

## Article IV--Officers

Section 1. The elected officers of this association shall be President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Section 2. The President shall select up to six members of the Board, who shall serve a term of one year.

Section 3. The term of office shall be one year beginning with July 1.

## Article V--Duties of Officers

Section 1. The President shall:

A. Preside as Chairperson of all membership meetings and Executive Committee meetings.

B. Function as the Chief Executive and business representative of this association.

C. Appoint all committees unless otherwise directed by the membership, and shall be an ex officio member of all committees.

D. Represent the association in any activities related to the education or interests of talented and gifted children and may delegate any member to represent the association if the President or the Vice-President are unable to serve.

E. Serve as a member of the Executive Committee.

Section 2. The Vice-President shall:

A. In the event of the absence or inability of the president to serve or function in any of her/his assigned duties, the Vice-President shall act in

the place, and with the authority of, the President.

B. Serve as Program Chairperson.

C. Serve as a member of the Executive Committee.

Section 3. The Secretary shall:

A. Keep accurate minutes of all membership meetings and Executive Committee meetings.

B. Have responsibility for necessary correspondence.

C. Keep membership records up-to-date and keep a mailing list of all members including names, addresses and telephone numbers.

D. Serve as a member of the Executive Committee.

Section 4. The Treasurer shall:

A. Pay all bills and obligations approved for payment by the Executive Committee.

B. Keep a true account of all transactions of the association.

C. Present a full financial report at each Executive Committee meeting.

D. Maintain an accurate dues record for each member.

E. Serve as a member of the Executive Committee.

Section 5. Board members shall:

A. Serve as members of the Executive Committee.

B. Watch over the affairs of the association in general.

Article VI--Executive Committee

Section 1. The authority and power of this organization is vested in the members thereof, acting by, and through their duly elected officers serving as an Executive Committee.

Section 2. Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be held monthly. The date of such meetings shall be set by the President. A quorum shall consist of five members.

Section 3. Executive Committee members shall be notified at least five days prior to the Executive Committee.

Section 4. Special meetings of the Executive Committee may be called by the President or by written notice to the President of three members of the Executive Committee.

Section 5. The By-Laws may be amended by a majority vote of those present and voting in Executive Committee meeting.

Section 6. The Executive Committee shall fill any vacancy in its membership from members of the association in good standing.

## Article VII--Election of Officers

Section 1. The Nominating Committee, consisting of three members selected by the President, shall prepare a slate of proposed officers for presentation in a newsletter preceding the annual meeting. Nominations may also be made by mail and from the floor at the annual meeting, provided the nominee has expressed a willingness to serve.

Section 2. Officers shall be elected at the annual meeting by secret referendum vote of all members in good standing present and voting.

Section 3. The candidate for each office receiving the largest number of votes shall be declared elected by the President. In the event of a tie, the presiding officer shall cast the deciding vote.

## Article VIII--Advisory Board

Section 1. The Executive Committee shall appoint an Advisory Board which shall consist of nine members plus the immediate past President of the association.

Section 2. Each Advisory Board member, excepting the immediate past President of the association, shall serve a three-year term. Initally, three members' terms shall expire after the first year, then three members' terms shall expire after the second year, and finally three members' terms shall expire the third year.

Section 3. The Advisory Board shall meet at least once a year immediately prior to the annual meeting and review the aims and purposes of

the association and make appropriate recommendations.

Section 4. The members of the Advisory Board shall designate a Chairperson and notify the Executive Committee.

## Article IX--Meetings

Section 1. General membership meetings shall be held at least six times a year at regular intervals with appropriate notice given to members. Special meetings may be called by the President, by two-thirds of the Executive Committee, or by one-fourth of the membership providing five days notice has been given to all members. The annual meeting will be the first regular meeting in May.

Section 2. All meetings and programs will be open to the public unless otherwise specified by the Executive Committee.

Section 3. All meetings of this association shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order.

## Article X--Dues and Income

Section 1. Dues will be set by the Executive Committee and will run from July 1 to June 30.

Section 2. Donations or grants may be received with the approval of the Executive Committee.

## Article XI--Committees

Section 1. Committees will be established by the President in cooperation with the Executive Board, and their functions assigned.

Section 2. The Standing Committees of the association shall be as follows:

A. The Program Committee shall provide and coordinate as appropriate, the program and agenda for the annual meeting, Executive Committee meetings and general membership meetings.

B. The Budget and finance committee shall prepare and propose a budget each year for the association

C. The Membership Committee shall be responsible for maintaining membership programs of the association.

D. The Publicity Committee shall provide information of the plans, goals, meetings and other relevant matters of the association for the use of members and non-members.

E. The Legislation Committee shall review and recommend to the Executive Committee positions on local, state and national legislation related to association goals.

F. The Nominating Committee shall nominate at appropriate times, persons to serve as officers or members of the Executive Committee and Advisory Boards.

G. The Scholarship Committee shall develop and administer a scholarship program to implement the special education of the talented and gifted children and/or teachers of the talented and gifted.

H. The Community Resource Committee shall provide information of local, state and national resources for parents and talented and gifted children.

I. The Newsletter Committee shall edit and publish the membership and other association publications at times designated and stipulated by the Executive Committee.

J. The Education Committee shall act as a liaison with the school board, school personnel and State Department of Education.

K. The Library and Materials Committee shall provide information on publications available on talented and gifted.

## Oregon Series on Talented & Gifted Education

- *Identifying the Talented and Gifted
- *Administering Policy for Talented and Gifted
- **Talented and Gifted Education Policy
- ***Parenting Gifted Children
- ***Organizing a Parent Support Group for Talented and Gifted
- ***Talented and Gifted School Programs
- ***The Gifted Preschool Child
- ***Characteristics of Talented and Gifted Children
- ***Who Is Gifted?
- ***Counseling Your Gifted Child

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